

VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA RELEASE

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**FOR INFORMATION CONTACT
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AT&T AGREES TO CORRECT BILLING PROBLEMS

Montpelier, VT – The Vermont Department of Public Service today announced that AT&T Corp. has agreed to conduct a thorough review of customer records to identify those Vermont consumers who have been billed in error. The agreement is an outgrowth of billing problems AT&T had nationally affecting nearly a million customers.

“Beginning in January, DPS and many other states began receiving complaints from consumers who were being billed in error by AT&T for a \$3.95 monthly charge, plus associated fees and charges, for AT&T’s basic state-to-state rate plan. Some were not AT&T customers. Others were AT&T customers who were billed for a charge that was not part of their rate plan,” said Deena Frankel, DPS Director for Consumer Affairs & Public Information. “In March, AT&T acknowledged the problem to regulators around the US and gave us an action plan to identify and corrected the errors.” According to Frankel, in Vermont, AT&T billed 1,289 non-AT&T customers. In addition, an unknown number of AT&T customers were billed the monthly \$3.95 charge, that did not apply to their particular calling plans.

“In the past month, DPS has continued to receive frequent calls from consumers who believe they are being billed in error. Our investigation showed that some of AT&T’s records do not match the local phone company’s records, resulting in AT&T billing some individuals who are subscribed to other toll carriers,” Frankel explained.

AT&T has agreed to conduct a review of its Vermont database for its basic rate long distance customers, so that former AT&T customer do not continue to be incorrectly billed by AT&T for the basic \$3.95 monthly charge. In the meantime, AT&T has agreed to suspend billing the basic monthly recurring charge for individuals who seek DPS intervention when DPS and the customer verify that the person was not an AT&T long distance customer.

“Until the database is completely cleaned up, it is important for consumers who believe they have been wrongfully billed to confirm they are no longer with AT&T,” said Frankel. “The Department urges Vermonters to look closely at their telephone bills. If consumers believe they have been billed in error, there are several steps to take. The first is to confirm they are with their carrier of choice for long

distance services.”

To confirm interstate toll carrier consumers can call 1-700-555-4141. To confirm the instate toll carrier (calls within Vermont) consumers call 1-802-700-4141. Both calls are toll free, and must be made from the phone number being verified.

Consumers who decide to terminate or switch their long distance service should notify their local telephone company of their decision to ensure that the termination or switch is completed.

Consumers who feel they should not have been billed by AT&T should call the company for assistance at 1-800-222-0300, or write AT&T, P.O. Box 944080, Maitland, FL 32794-4080.

Consumers who are unsuccessful in getting a satisfactory resolution from AT&T, may contact the DPS Consumer Affairs and Public Information Division by calling its toll-free Consumer Hotline 1-800-622-4496 (TTY: 1-800-734-8390) Monday through Friday, 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., or e-mail consumer@state.vt.us.

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